WILLIAM BLAKE

Mysterium Coniunctionis: Jung, Blake and the alchemy of the Brain, by Rod Tweedy

March 21, 2021 by Golgonooza

The Philosopher's Stone and the integration of the Brain
(https://thehumandivine.org/2021/03/21/mysterium-coniunctionis-jung-blake-and-the-alchemy-of-the-brain-by-rod-tweedy/)

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am⁷ du bis der anfang.
am⁷ du bis der stern des elends.
am⁷ du bis die blume die über alle
blucht.
am⁷ du bis der hirt⁷ der aus dem walde
bricht.
am⁷ du bis der gesang der ferne tiefe
das wasser teilt.
am⁷ du bis ende und anfang.

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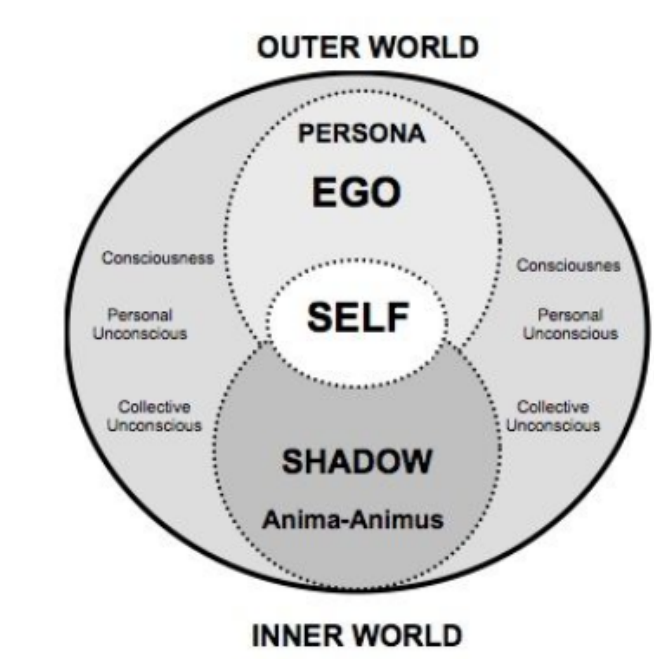
Introduction

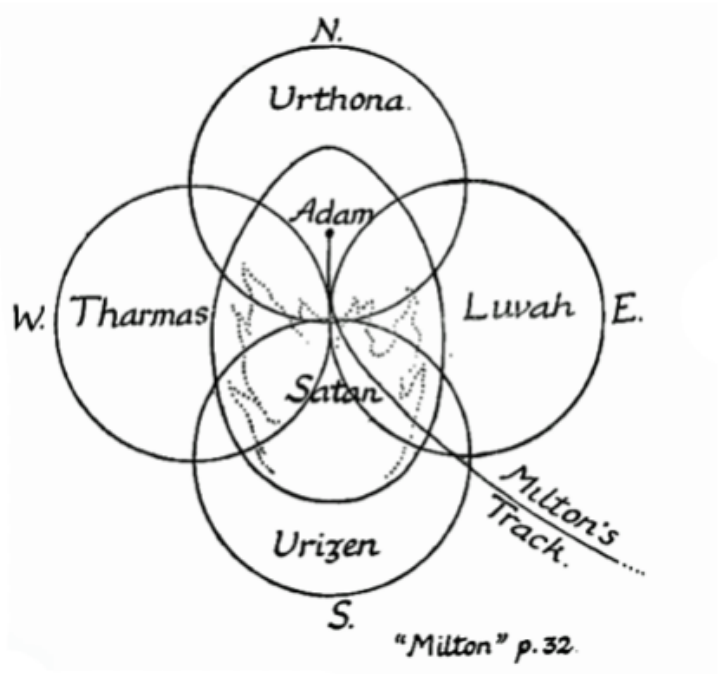
Mysterium Coniunctionis was Jung's last great work. He was engaged on it for more than a decade, from 1941-1954, and finished it in his eightieth year. The book therefore occupies, as one critic observed, "the culminating position in his writings" (*The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*). In it he compellingly links the practices of alchemy and psychology through a profound analysis of symbolism and an examination of their shared ideas of the integration and 'union of opposites'. As he notes, "Not only does this modern psychological discipline give us the key to the secrets of alchemy, but, conversely, alchemy provides the psychology of the unconscious with a meaningful historical basis."

It's a fascinating, illuminating, and at times breath-taking study, which draws not only on a wide number of alchemical texts but also on Kabbalistic ideas and symbols such as Adam Kadmon (Primordial Man), the Sefirot, and the union of the 'Holy One' and his bride. According to Jung, humankind has historically moved from a condition in which it projects the contents of its unconscious onto the world and heavens to one in which, as a result of a total identification with the rational powers of the ego, it has not only withdrawn its vivifying projections from the world but also fails to recognize or understand the archetypes of the unconscious mind.

The problems of this identification with the "rational powers" of the left hemispheric ego (which Blake termed 'Urizen'), that have led to this withdrawal and disintegration, therefore form a central part of Jung's analysis. These ideas are particularly thought-provoking in conjunction with recent research into the nature of the divided brain, linking Jung's alchemical 'opposites' with the opposing left and right hemispheres. A number of prominent leading neuroscientists and psychologists (including Schore, Cozolino, McGilchrist, and Siegel) have correlated these twin hemispheres with, respectively, the conscious 'rationalising' mind and the 'unconscious', more imaginative, networks of consciousness (see *The Divided Therapist* (https://www.routledge.com/The-Divided-Therapist-Hemispheric-Difference-and-Contemporary-Psychotherapy/Tweedy/p/book/9780367504427), 2021). Jung's conception of the "fourfold" nature of the psyche also resonates in remarkable ways with William Blake's fourfold model, both dividing the embodied consciousness into four distinct but inter-related systems: thinking, feeling, intuition and sensation (Urizen, Luvah, Urthona, and Tharmas, in Blake's work).



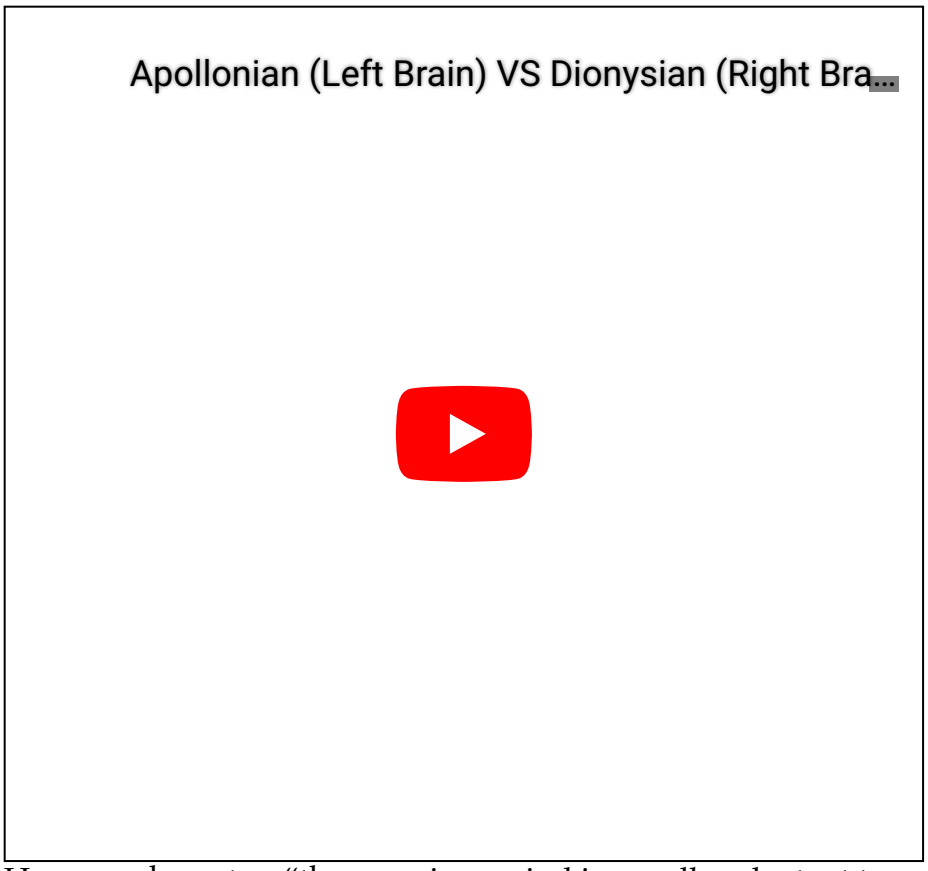
Jung's Model of the Fourfold Psyche



Blake's Model of the Four Zoas

The Divided One

Jung begins by noting "the polaristic structure of the psyche", and indeed of "all natural processes". It is precisely this underlying "polarity" within things, he observes, which produces energy. Energy (and therefore life itself, including psychic life) is the result of these contraries – i.e. where it gets its "energy" from. "For just as there is no energy without the tension of opposites, so there can be no consciousness without the perception of differences" (*Mysterium Coniunctionis,* p. 494).



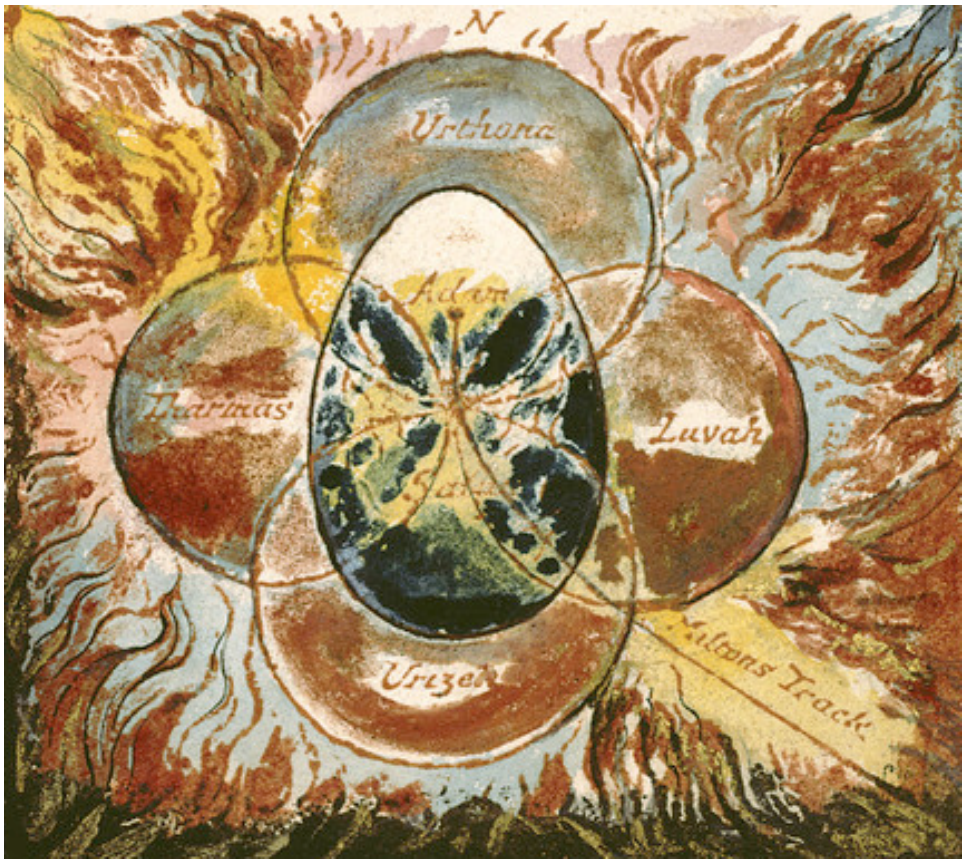
However, he notes, “the conscious mind is usually reluctant to see or admit the polarity of its own background, although it is precisely from there that it gets its energy”. Thus, again, it is the so-called “conscious”, rational mind or ego that stands in the way of integration.

Indeed, it is the conscious rational ego which is seemingly the source of the fragmentation and dissociation within the psyche in the first place: relating this to the mythology of “Creation” in the Book of Genesis, Jung notes that the cause of the original subject-object splitting is “when that inchoately conscious complex, the ego, the son of the darkness, knowingly sundered subject and object, and thus precipitated the world and itself into definite existence.” The key word here is “knowingly”.

"the cause of the original subject-object splitting" (Image: *Elohim Creating Adam* by William Blake, depicting this painful moment of 'creation' – or rather 'division').

Jung is particularly interesting here in his comments on the relationship between the "psyche" and the "brain", remarking that the psyche is in many ways "largely dependent" on the brain. The relation of psyche to the physical/body is "mutually dependent", he notes, commenting on "the undeniable fact that causal connections exist between the psyche and the body which point to their underlying unitary nature." Once again, the "rationalising" left-brain mind prefers not to accept this – a point that of course has had a dreadful and deleterious effect throughout the history of psychoanalysis, reinforcing the Cartesian splits and dissociations that characterise modern disembodied thinking. As the brilliant British psychiatrist Charles Rycroft noted, Freud's classical model of the psyche, forever split between rationalising ego and affective id "presupposes as normal a split between mind and body, between will and desire, which can itself be regarded as pathological" (Rycroft (https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/beyond-reality-principle-1-charles-rycroft/10.4324/9780429475764-8)). Human beings, he points out, "are single creatures and not phantom psyches mounted on an animal body", an image curiously evocative of the cynocephalus gods of ancient

Egypt, and one that accurately suggests the cultural beginnings of the dissociated and psychoneurotic frame of mind. These divorced polarities, again, need to be unified and integrated if the psyche is ever to become healthy (literally, "whole").



"it is as if the brain is an 'egg' – which 'broods' over its 'images'"

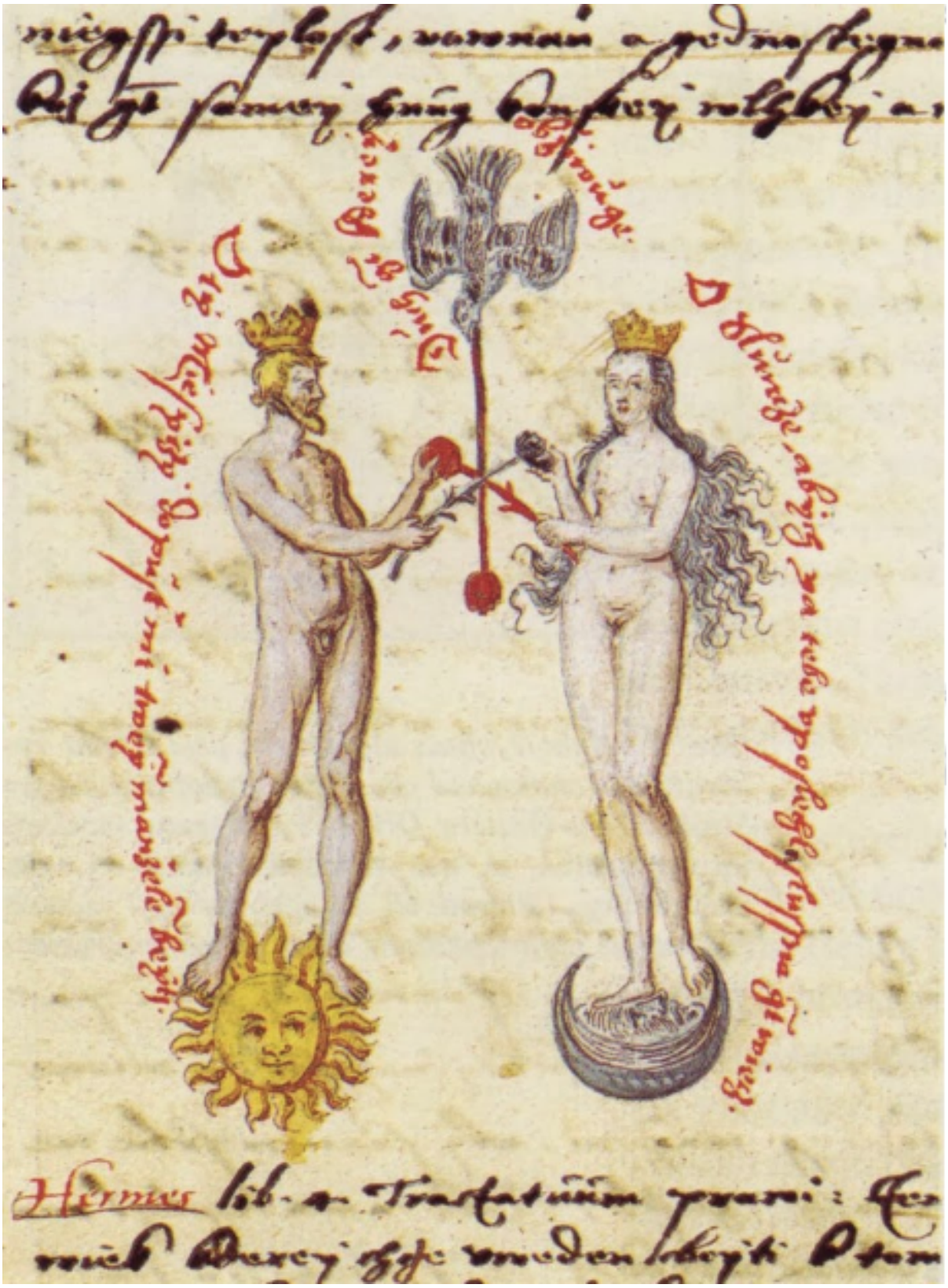
Jung links this all to the framework, symbolism, and processes outlined in alchemical texts. He suggests a link between the "philosopher's stone" or "lapis" and the brain itself, "the stone that is no stone" (i.e., is also consciousness) – it is as if the brain is an 'egg', he notes – which 'broods' over its 'images', the surface of the sea (as in Genesis), in order to bring forth images and help reunite and reconcile them. This process is simultaneously creative (how the imaginative brain hatches reality out of this 'hovering' over phenomena, as in quantum observation) and psychoanalytic (the therapeutic process whereby the analyst's 'conscious' mind, or 'brain-stone', broods over the Ucs. of the 'patient' in order to bring something forth). "The brain", he therefore suggests, "is a synonym for the arcane substance".

The whole goal or idea of 'coniunctio', he acutely notes, "presupposes a *dissociated consciousness*" (italicised in Jung). That is, this is our 'normal' state of consciousness in modernity – a point also recognised by Laing (*The Divided Self* (https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/134/13478/the-divided-self/9780141189376.html)). Rational, egoic consciousness is dissociated consciousness, that doesn't even realise that it's dissociated. Jung discusses "the divided mind" (p. 260), linking it to the symbolism of dismemberment and division in early Egyptian and alchemical texts (e.g., "The Divided One", p. 1281, associated with Osiris). Part of what Osiris represents is the human generative body itself, divided and dismembered by analytic reasoning.

The Great Divider: “Rational, egoic consciousness is dissociated consciousness”

These splits and divisions happen on multiple levels and domains: temporal (day/night), ethical (good/evil), spatial (up/down), sexual (masculine/feminine): “the inherent duality explains the duplications that so often occur”, Jung notes (e.g. the “two” sulphurs, the “two” quicksilvers of alchemical texts, and the characteristic symbolic dualisms within Egyptian thinking: the “two crowns”, “two lands”, “two plumes”, “two serpents”, “two thrones”). “These synonyms represent the elements to be united as a pair of opposites”. And surely ‘left’ and ‘right’ are among the deepest of these, especially

in relation to the body – that is, the "conscious" and the "unconscious" sides (which, as Jung observes, also in turn give rise to our ideas of and associations with the Sol and Luna: the "light" or sun of egoic rational consciousness, and the much deeper and more embodied "darkness" of the implicit right hemispheric "Luna", i.e., the unconscious).



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Psychoanalysis and the Colonisation of the Unconscious

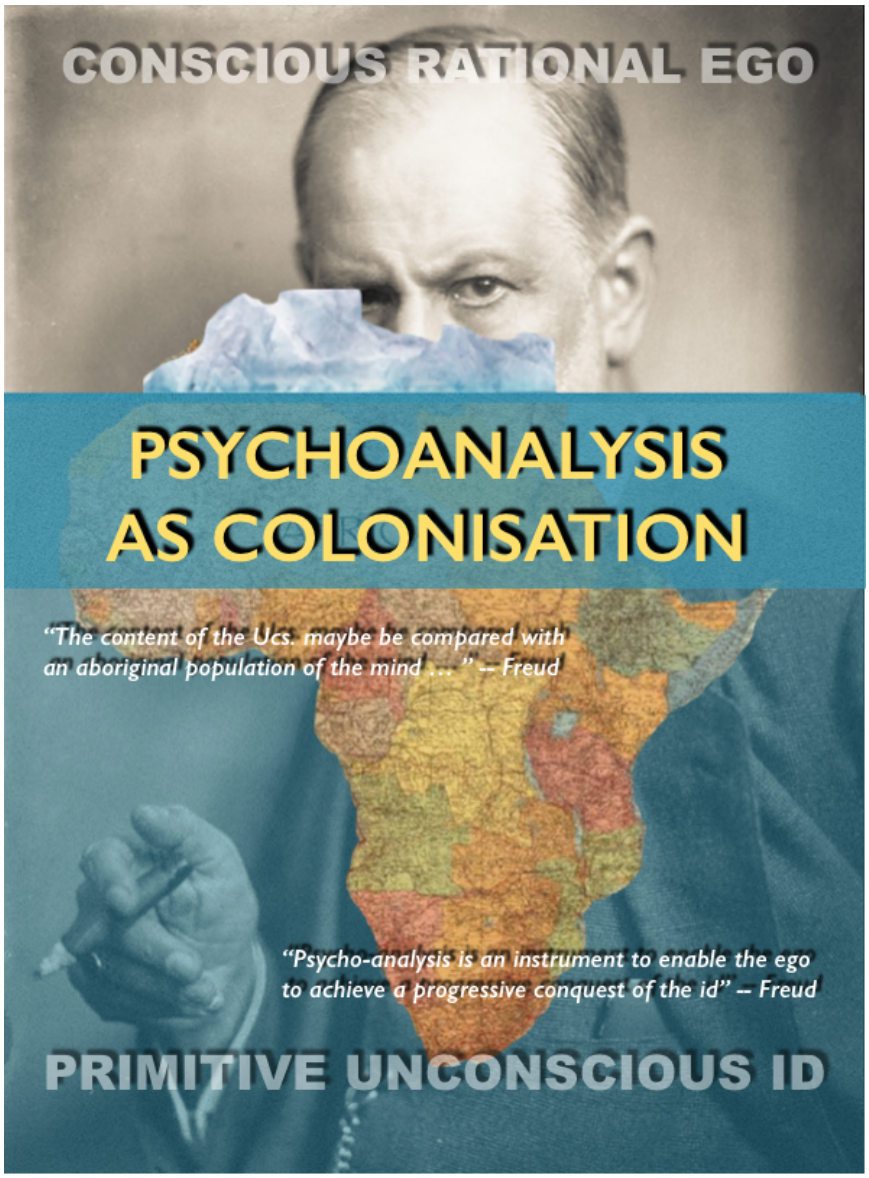
Despite all of his remarkable insights into this process, Jung is in some ways very much a man of his time and "civilisation" in ultimately siding or identifying with this egoic solar consciousness, over an "unconsciousness" which, for all its healing potential, he continually presents as being "primitive", "chaotic", seething, and dangerous:

The rational Ego's View of Itself. Aka, Jung's view of the Ego. Aka, *Satan in his Original Glory* (Blake, 1805)

> The psychological equivalent of the chaotic water of the beginning is the unconscious, which the old writers could grasp only in projected form … The shadow is the primitive who is still alive and active in civilised man, and our civilised reason means nothing to him. He needs to be ruled by a higher authority, such as is found in the great religions … 'Africa' is not a bad image for this … the 'inferior' function, which is the darkest and the most unconscious of all.
>
> In view of the supreme importance of the ego in bringing reality to light, we can understand why this infinitesimal speck in the universe was personified as the sun, with all the attributes that this image implies.

This view of the unconscious, and of the ego, is very unfortunate, and a real limitation to his thinking, reflecting perhaps his own rather problematic relationship to his ego. What is needed is a genuine 'coniunctio' – not a coniunctio on the ego's terms or done basically just to strengthen the conscious left brain's ego and empire.

Sadly, Jung too often treats the "dark" unconscious and the body itself in terms that recall colonialism, as Adam Phillips amongst others have pointed out, for example in his penetrating analysis of Freud's similar view of the "id" as something to be controlled, converted, and subjugated. In his famous *New*


CONSCIOUS RATIONAL EGO
PSYCHOANALYSIS
AS COLONISATION
"The content of the Ucs. maybe be compared with an aboriginal population of the mind ... " -- Freud
"Psycho-analysis is an instrument to enable the ego to achieve a progressive conquest of the id" -- Freud
PRIMITIVE UNCONSCIOUS ID

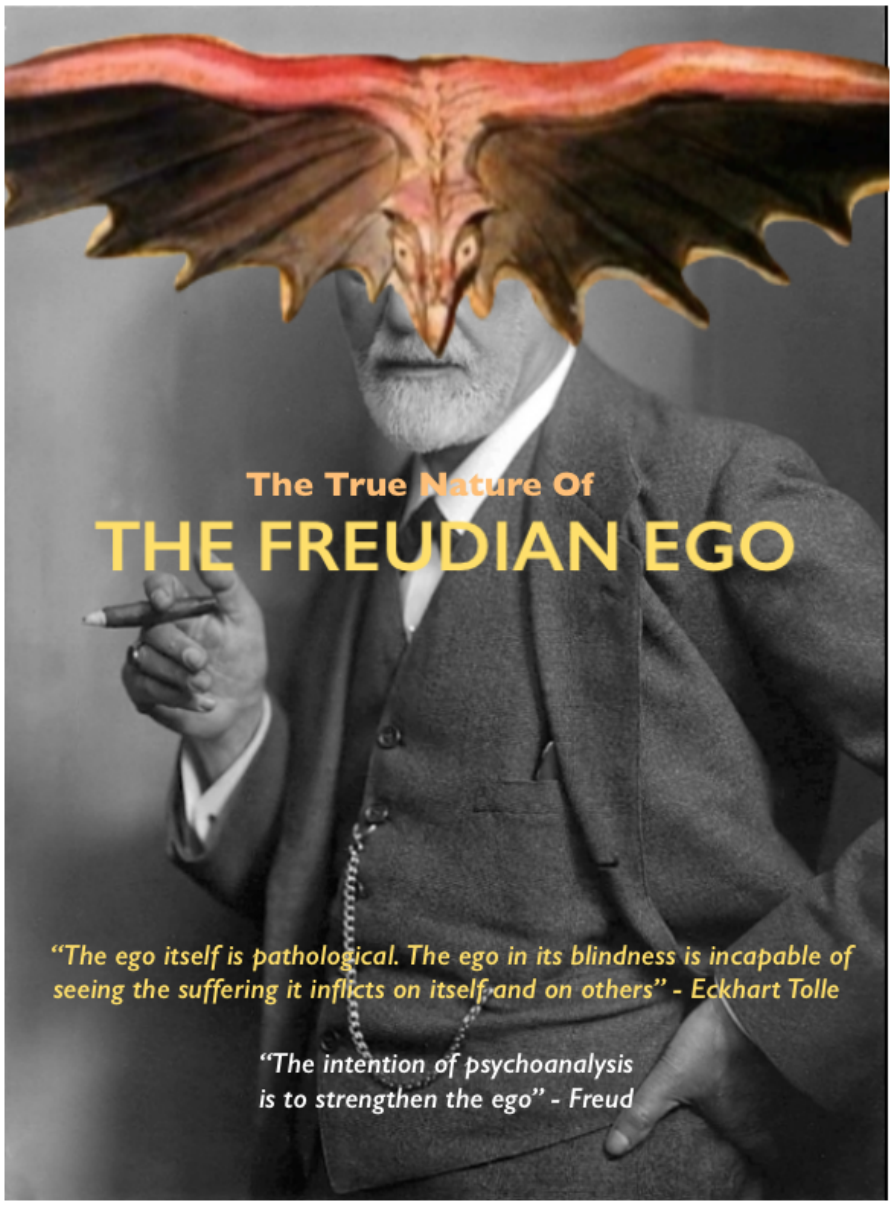
(https://www.facebook.com/ThePoliticalSelf/posts/4624685790906476)

"In his famous New Introductory Lectures of 1933, Freud influentially described the project of psychoanalysis as being like the draining of a sea, a cultural attempt to make the 'unconscious conscious', and to reinforce the conscious, explicit, left brain system" (Psychoanalysis as Colonisation (https://www.facebook.com/ThePoliticalSelf/posts/4624685790906476))

Introductory Lectures of 1933, Freud influentially described the project of psychoanalysis as being like the draining of a sea, a cultural attempt to make the "unconscious conscious", and to reinforce the conscious, explicit, left brain system. The aim and intention of psychoanalysis, he famously remarked, was "to strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the super-ego, to widen its field of perception and enlarge its organization, so that it can appropriate fresh portions of the id. Where id was, there ego shall be. It is a work of culture — not unlike the draining of the Zuider Zee" (Freud, 1933a).

As Adam Phillips notes, "Conquest, of course, has troubling associations with both sexuality and empire, as though psychoanalysis had become imperialism by other means. As though Freud was proposing, as a man of his times, the colonisation of the self or the id – as though 'Where Id was, There Ego shall be' could be an epigraph for Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (Phillips (http://www.conferevents.org/phillips.html), 2018).

Jung similarly talks about "the darkness of the unconscious, which contains in the first place the inferior personality", "half-animal", the "dark" unconscious – which the "rational, spiritual psyche" he claims is entrapped and "enchained" by (he frequently talks about "freeing the soul from the fetters of the body"; of the "imprisonment in the body"; "the corrupt body"; "This insight was reason enough for a dissociation of consciousness into a spiritual and a physical personality" etc).


The True Nature Of
THE FREUDIAN EGO
"The ego itself is pathological. The ego in its blindness is incapable of seeing the suffering it inflicts on itself and on others" - Eckhart Tolle
"The intention of psychoanalysis is to strengthen the ego" - Freud

(https://www.facebook.com/ThePoliticalSelf/posts/4507030196005370)

As psychoanalyst Erich Fromm observed: "Well-being means, finally, to drop one's Ego. To give up greed. To cease chasing after the preservation and the aggrandisement of the ego. To be, and to experience oneself, in the act of being – not in having, preserving, coveting, using" (The True Nature of the Freudian Ego (https://www.facebook.com/ThePoliticalSelf/posts/4507030196005370))

Such conversion and subjugation is of course the very opposite of the whole task of "coniunctio". This "dissociation of consciousness", triggered by what Jung rather laughingly or at least naively calls "the higher mental faculties such as reason, insight, and moral discrimination" is precisely the whole problem: the task that the arduous work of "coniuncto" was meant to try and resolve. And it's all the more frustrating because Jung at times clearly recognises that this destructive caricature of the

"unconscious" is largely the result of how it has been treated and seen by the so-called "conscious", egoic mind: he even admits at one point that "the unconscious has a bad reputation" and that if the repressive egoic Consciousness treats it badly, then the Ucs. reacts badly:

> But the unconscious is also feared by those whose conscious attitude is at odds with their true nature. Naturally their dreams will then assume an unpleasant and threatening form, for if nature is violated she takes her revenge. In itself the unconscious is neutral, and its normal function is to compensate the conscious position. In it the opposites slumber side by side; they are wrenched apart only by the activity of the conscious mind, and the more one-sided and cramped the conscious standpoint is, the more painful or dangerous will be the unconscious reaction.

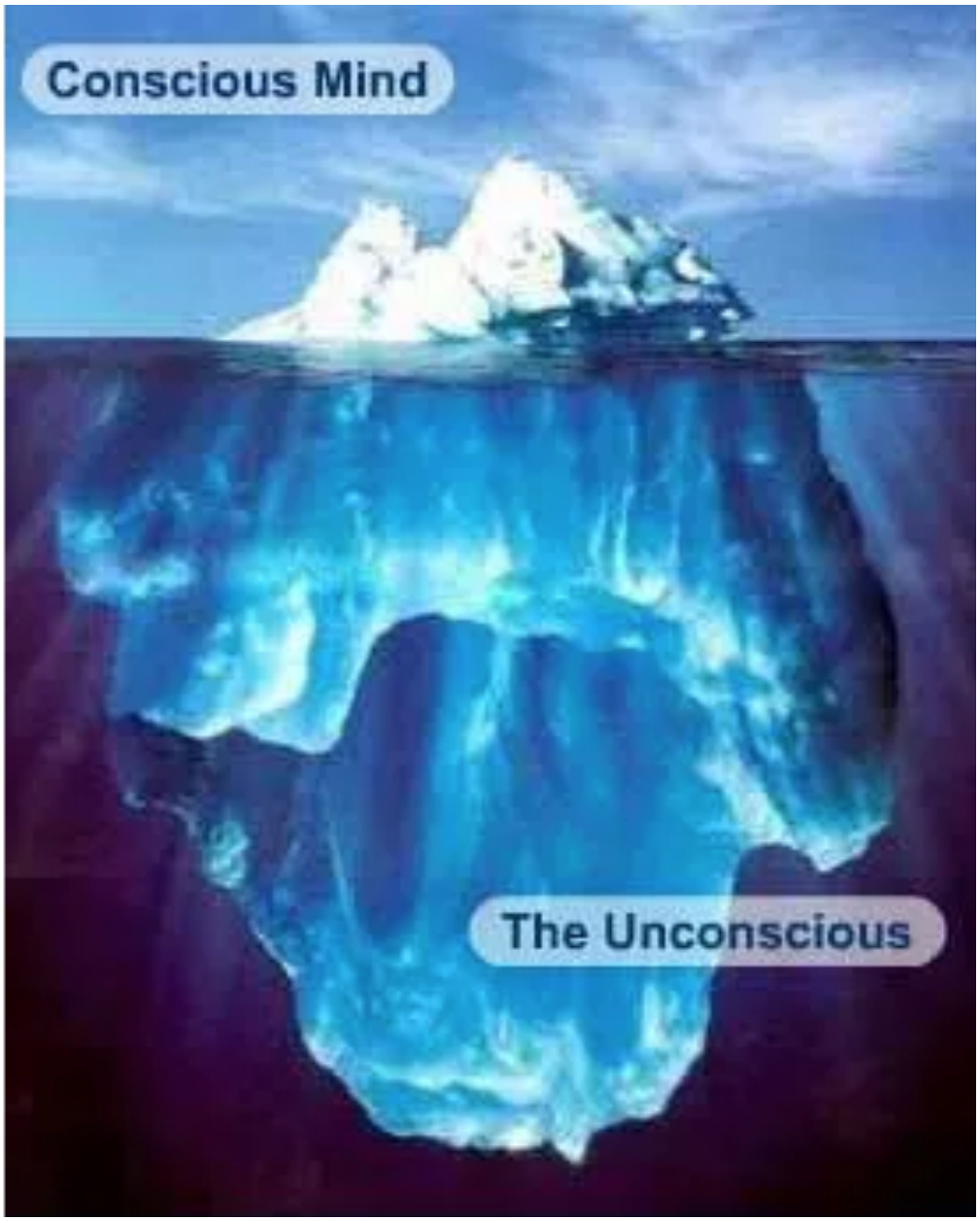
"*They are wrenched apart only by the activity of the conscious mind*" – this is the important point. If the unconscious can sometimes be terrifying and threatening – which it certainly can be – it is largely in response to – in "reaction" to – how it has been treated. Plus, the Ucs. is better than simply "neutral" I think – it has deep integration and wisdom – as Jung's reference to its positively and transformationally compensatory nature suggests. Even Freud had conceded that the whole impulse towards therapy and integration comes *from* the unconscious: it is the conscious ego, he notes, that is the agent of "repression", not wanting to admit these insights.

The Conscious Unconscious and the Unconscious Conscious

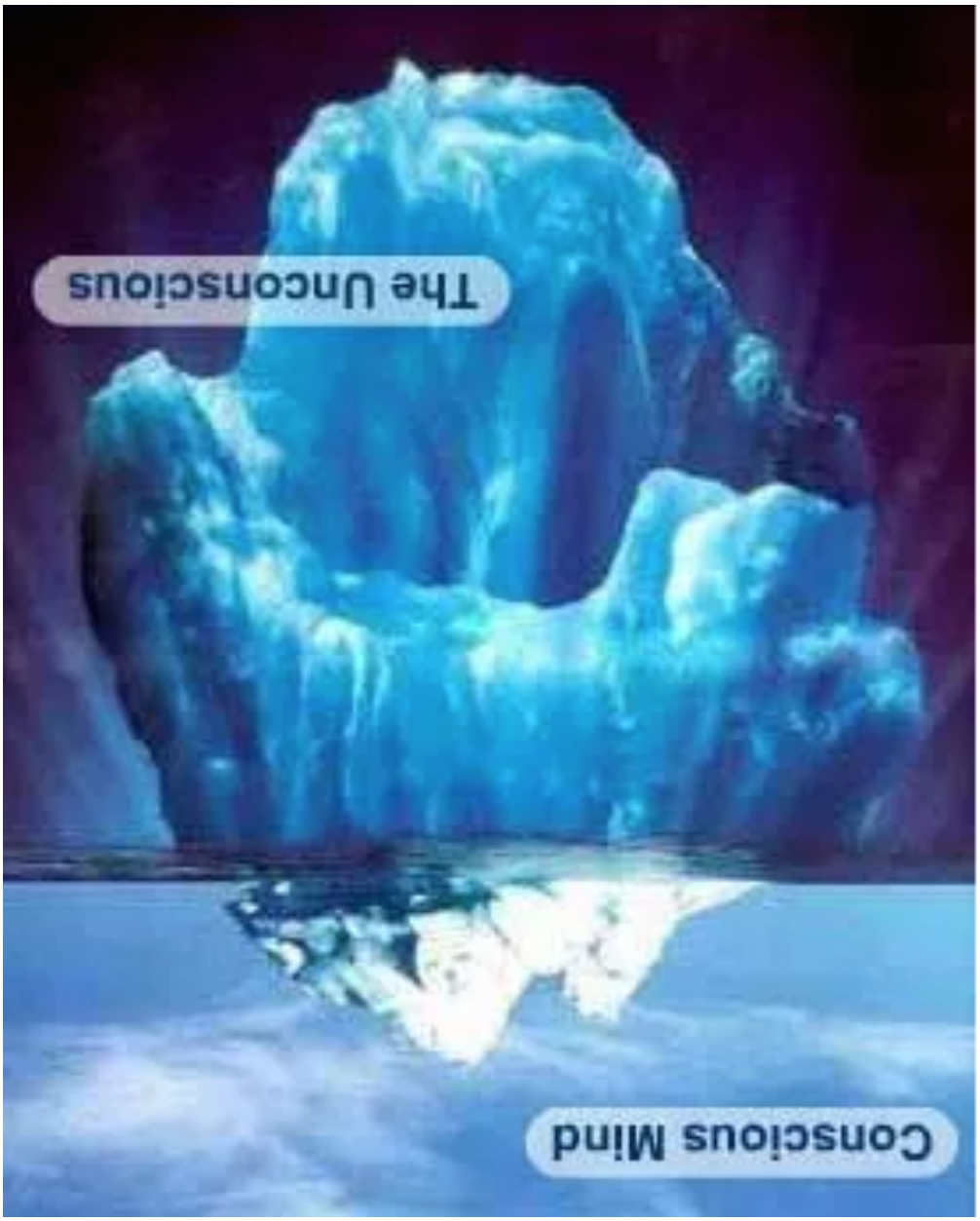
As recent psychotherapists and neuroscientists are now recognising, the purpose of therapy is not in fact to "make the unconscious conscious", in the old Freudian formula (ie to *convert* the unconscious to the conscious), but rather to genuinely integrate the two, to restructure and to expand the *unconscious* itself – that is, to expand, develop, and heal the right hemisphere forms of implicit knowing and being that constitute the very root both of our implicit sense of self and of the therapeutic (and alchemic) process. In this process of deep integration it is actually the "conscious" ego that is the obstacle, as indeed Freud himself recognised: "what is being mobilized for fighting against the alterations we are striving for are character-traits, attitudes of the ego":

> We must above all get rid of the mistaken notion that what we are dealing with in our struggle against resistances is resistance on the part of the *unconscious*. The unconscious – that is to say, the 'repressed' – offers no resistance whatever to the efforts of the treatment. Indeed, it itself has no other endeavour than to break through the pressure weighing down on it and force its way either to consciousness or to a discharge through some real action. Resistance during treatment arises from the same higher strata and systems of the mind which originally carried out the repression … [W]e can say that the patient's resistance arises from his ego. (Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle (https://www.karnacbooks.com/product/standard-edition-vol-18-beyond-the-pleasure-principle-group-psychology-and-other-works/6870/?MATCH=1), italics in original)

It is the ego, and the so-called "conscious" ("civilised") mind, that is preventing the treatment, the therapy from happening – the ego that mobilises against both the patient and the analyst in order to protect the patient from self-knowledge, from integration.



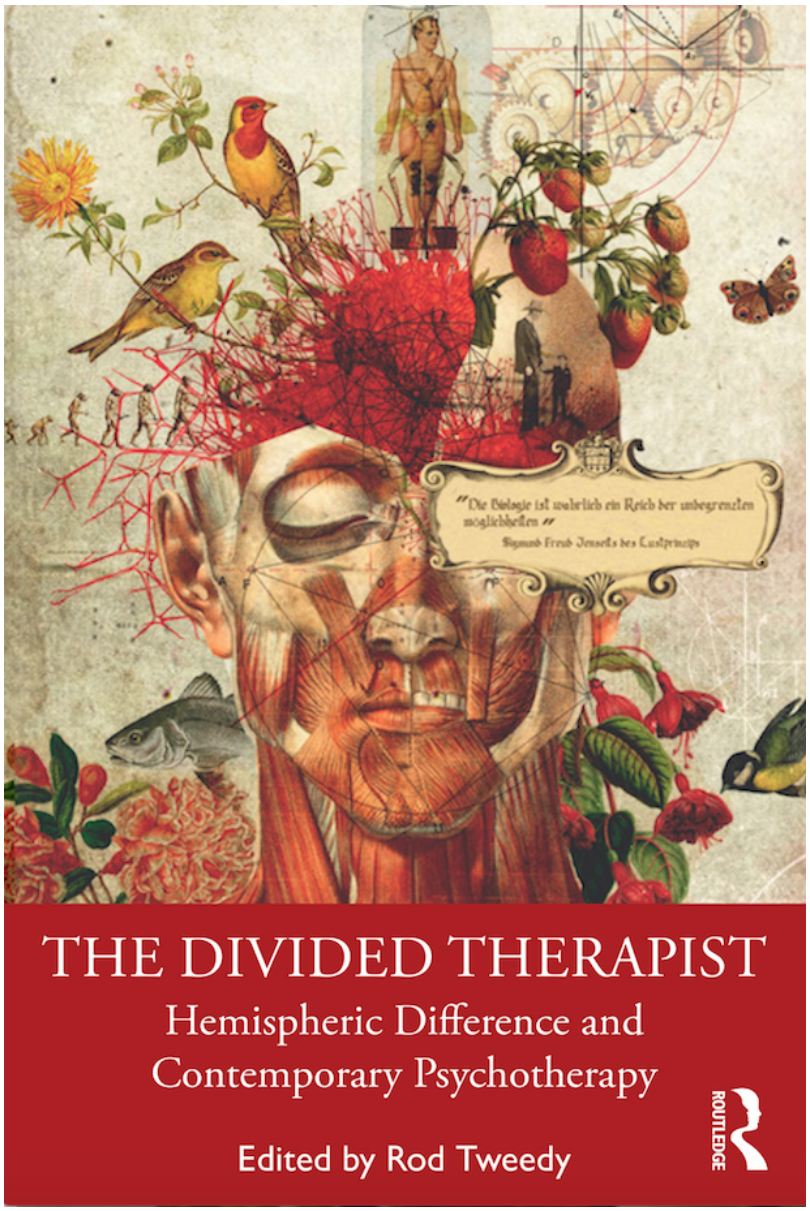
Freud's archaic view of the relation between the conscious and the unconscious (above). What this relation more properly is (below)



Traditionally, post-Freudian analysis sought to 'make the unconscious conscious', but the more we learn about the unconscious and its involvement with right hemisphere networks and processes, and therefore with the more sophisticated, intelligent, and aware aspects of the brain, the more this formulation needs to be revised and updated, and to some extent abandoned. "It is in reality the right hemisphere that sees more, that is more in touch with reality, and is more intellectually sophisticated", notes McGilchrist acutely. "The left hemisphere does not understand things, so much as process them: it is the right hemisphere that is the basis of understanding" (*The Master and his Emissary*). Pioneering figures within contemporary therapy such as Allan Schore, Mark Solms, Louis Cozolino, and Dan Siegel have understood this profound shift in our understanding, and are indeed doing exactly that:

> In terms of psychotherapy, change is not so much about increasing the left's reasoned control over emotion, as it is the expansion of affect tolerance and regulation of the right-lateralised 'emotional brain' and the human relatedness of the right-lateralised 'social brain'. (Schore, *The Science of the Art of Psychotherapy* (https://www.karnacbooks.com/product/the-science-of-the-art-of-psychotherapy/32783/?MATCH=1))

The proper aim of psychotherapy, in other words, is not to convert the id into the ego, the implicit into


"Die Biologie ist wahrlich ein Reich der unbegrenzten Möglichkeiten"
Sigmund Freud Jenseits des Lustprinzips
THE DIVIDED THERAPIST
Hemispheric Difference and Contemporary Psychotherapy
Edited by Rod Tweedy
ROUTLEDGE
(https://www.routledge.com/The-Divided-Therapist-Hemispheric-Difference-and-Contemporary-Psychotherapy/Tweedy/p/book/9780367504427)

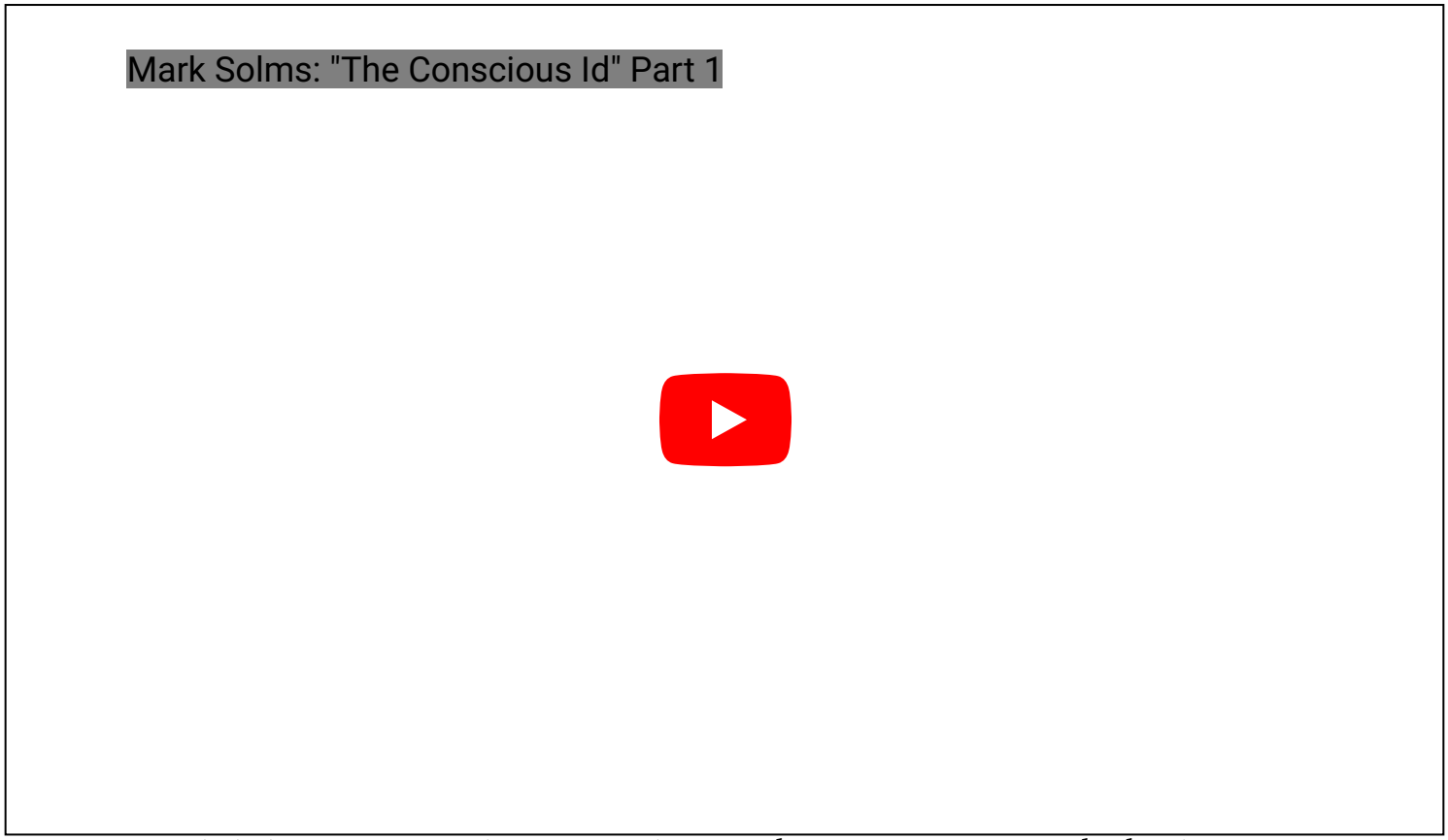
"The aim of psychotherapy is not to convert the id into the ego, the implicit into the explicit, or the right brain into the left, but rather to restructure and expand the 'unconscious' itself: see Schore, McGilchrist, Dowds, Narvaez, in *The Divided Therapist* (https://www.routledge.com/The-Divided-Therapist-Hemispheric-Difference-and-Contemporary-Psychotherapy/Tweedy/p/book/9780367504427)(Routledge, 2020)"

the explicit, or the right brain into the left, but rather to restructure and reintegrate the so-called 'unconscious' itself (see for example the recent work of Schore, Dowds, Narvaez, and McGilchrist in *The Divided Therapis*t (https://www.routledge.com/The-Divided-Therapist-Hemispheric-Difference-and-Contemporary-Psychotherapy/Tweedy/p/book/9780367504427)). This involves re-thinking our ideas about exactly what we mean by 'consciousness', and even to open up the possibility that what we have previously considered and called the 'unconscious' might actually be a far more highly conscious, aware, and functioning system than the more explicit, verbalised, slower form of rational, egoic 'consciousness' that traditionally therapy and psychoanalysis has focussed on – and one which increasingly seems itself to be 'unconscious' in many of its approaches and suppositions about itself.

Jung's great project for the alchemical 'coniunctio' was always hampered by his elevation of the solar rationalising ego, of the "conscious" aspect of mind. However brilliant and useful this "conscious" side is, it is still – in McGilchrist's powerful metaphor – the "servant", not the "master" (as Jung had ultimately and unfortunately seen it). Once this Error is corrected, a true and remarkable conjunction is now possible.

As Solms and Panksepp note, commenting on the exciting new theories regarding the nature and structures of what they strikingly term "the conscious id", it seems to be the core of the brain (that is, the deeper limbic structures in the brain stem and midbrain) that actually generates consciousness, not the "conscious" cortex: "When Freud famously proclaimed 'where id was, there shall ego be' as the therapeutic goal of his 'talking cure', he assumed that the ego enlightened the id. It now appears more likely that the opposite happens" (Solms & Panksepp, *The "Id" knows more than the "Ego" admits* (https://www.mdpi.com/2076-3425/2/2/147/htm)).

Twenty-first century psychotherapy therefore aims not at converting the unconscious into the conscious, the id into the ego, but at "the expansion of the right brain human unconscious". Psycho-therapy – the repair and healing of the psyche – is thus a process of *reorganising, re-regulation, and repair* of the deep unconscious itself. "Regulation theory describes not just making the unconscious conscious but restructuring the unconscious, allowing for further maturation of the right brain unconscious system" (Schore).



"It is commonly believed", note Solms and Panksepp, "that consciousness is a higher brain function". But as their recent work suggests, the latest research indicates that it is actually the "lower brain affective phenomenal experiences" which generate consciousness (Solms & Panksepp (https://www.mdpi.com/2076-3425/2/2/147/htm), 2012). Primary thinking, and awareness, seem to arise from the implicit systems of the so-called unconscious: or what Solms and Panksepp have now reformulated as "the conscious id":

> Our major conclusion may be stated thus: the core self, synonymous with Freud's 'id', is the font of all consciousness; the declarative self, synonymous with Freud's 'ego', is unconscious in itself. However, because the ego stabilizes the core consciousness generated by the id, by transforming affects into object representations, and more particularly verbal object re-representations, we ordinarily think of ourselves as being conscious in the latter sense. (Solms & Panksepp)

It would be wonderful to bring together some of these radical new psychological and neuroscientific insights into what we now know about the remarkably sophisticated and superconscious nature of the unconscious with Jung's own pioneering work in depth psychology. This suggests that we should perhaps be revering and worshipping our unconsciouses (as indeed the pioneering analyst Georg Groddeck did), not trying to drain them or rationalise them. Only then can the psychoneurotic model of the psyche be healed, generating the reconciliation rather than the dissociation of the rational and the affective, the left and the right, the conscious and the unconscious: the dream of Jung's *Mysterium Coniunctionis*. Or as Blake put it, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (https://www.bartleby.com/235/253.html).

My Chymical Wedding: for "coniunctio" to be effective, or meaningful, it has to be proper *coniunctio* – not just a one night stand for the benefit of the ego. Since the rise of left hemispheric, egoic consciousness and its dominating and disconnected nature and agenda (captured in the early stories of pathological new egoic 'heroes' such as Hercules and Gilgamesh), the conscious, rational (Urizenic) mind sadly sees the unconscious like it sees women, and Nature, and the working class: as something to use, exploit, control, and subjugate. The id became not a beautiful, unseen, implicit, right hemispheric Other, but a dragon to be pierced, demonised, and brutalised: an image reified in the obnoxious iconography of relentless St Georges and St Michaels (pure, spiritual, Logos, holy), now at war with a Body that it could neither control nor feel at home in.

Rod Tweedy, PhD, is the author of *The God of the Left Hemisphere: Blake, Bolte Taylor and the Myth of Creation* (https://www.routledge.com/The-God-of-the-Left-Hemisphere-Blake-Bolte-Taylor-and-the-Myth-of-Creation/Tweedy/p/book/9781780491011) (Routledge, 2013), a study of William Blake's works in the light of contemporary neuroscience, and the editor of *The Political Self: Understanding the Social Context for Mental Illness* (https://www.routledge.com/The-Political-Self-Understanding-the-Social-Context-for-Mental-Illness/Tweedy/p/book/9781782204091) (Routledge, 2017) and *The Divided Therapist: Hemispheric Difference and Contemporary Psychotherapy* (https://www.karnacbooks.com/product/the-divided-therapist-hemispheric-difference-and-contemporary-psychotherapy/95303/) (Routledge, 2020).

Adam Kadmon Adam Phillips Blake and the alchemy of the Brain Book of Genesis Charles Rycroft civilisation conscious and unconscious mind contraries and energy Cozolino creation as division dissociated consciousness egoic solar consciousness Elohim Creating Adam fourfold model of the psyche Freud Jung Kabbalah left and right hemispheres McGilchrist Mysterium Coniunctionis Psychoanalysis and the Colonialism of the Unconscious rational powers of the ego Rod Tweedy Schore Siegel Sol and Luna Solms and Panksepp the aim of psychotherapy the conscious id The Conscious Unconscious and the Unconscious Conscious The Divided One The Marriage of Heaven and Hell The Philosopher's Stone and the integration of the Brain the polaristic structure of the psyche there ego shall be union of opposites Urizen Where id was

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